

John Crook
by Ethel Duke Johnson

Treasures of Pioneer History

Compiled by

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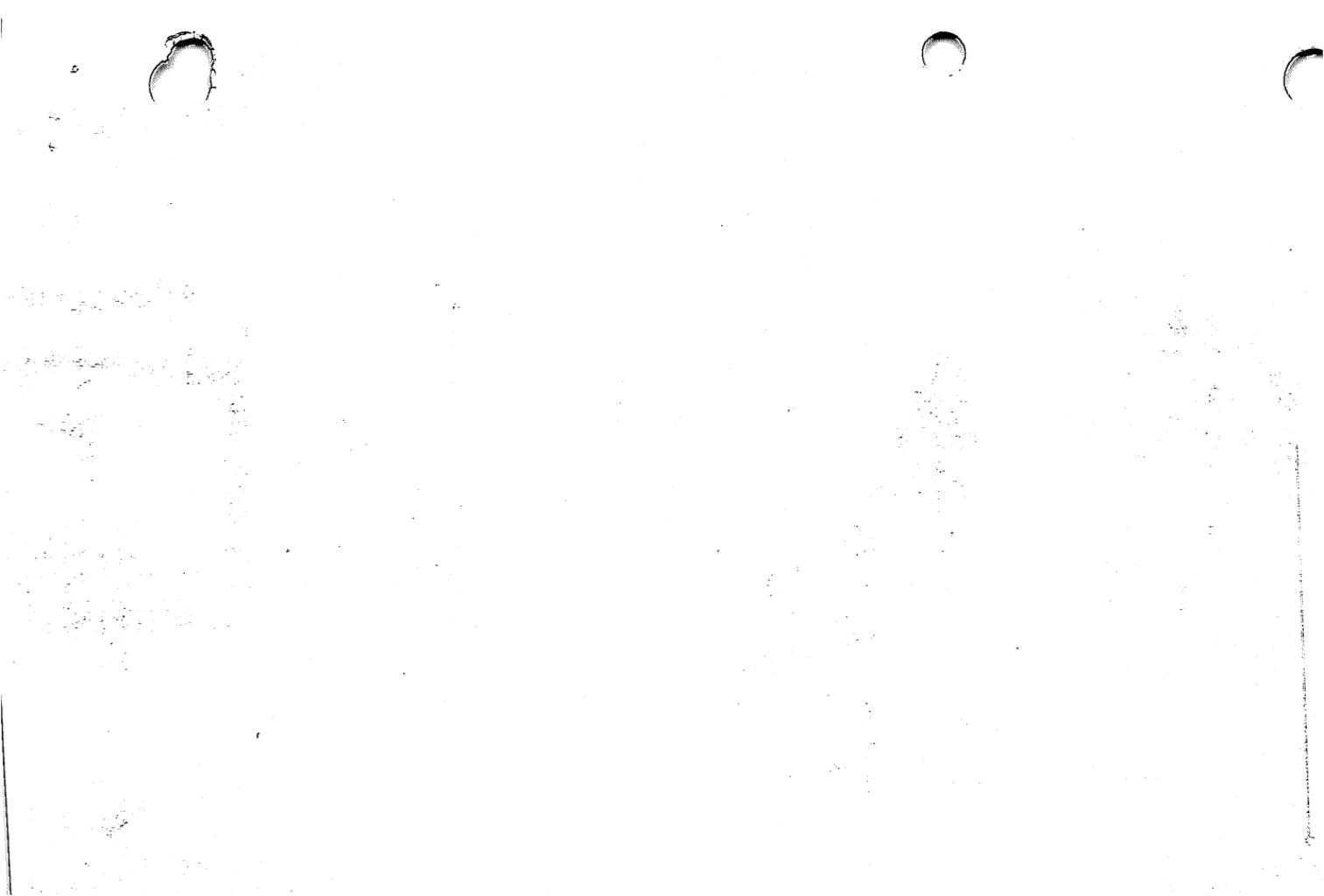


Daughters of Utah Pioneers

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PHILEMON C. MERRILL COMPANY

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Philemon C. Merrill was born November 12, 1820, in Byron, Genesee County, New York, a son of Samuel Merrill and Phoebe Odell. He was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints March, 1839, near Carthage, Illinois. He joined the Mormon Battalion in Council Bluffs and served as Second Lieutenant in Company B, marching to California.

Philemon came to the Salt Lake Valley after his honorable discharge from service with Captain Jefferson Hunt and seven other members of the Battalion, arriving October 11, 1847, where he found his father, mother and two sisters. He returned to Winter Quarters for his family and came back to Utah October 16, 1849. In 1851 he went to the States and brought forty-four wagons with goods back for Thomas S. Williams.

Mr. Merrill filled a mission to Europe in 1853-56 and on his return was put in charge of a wagon company crossing the plains to Utah. At various times he lived in Provo, Farmington, Morgan County, Utah, Soda Springs, Idaho, thence to Bennington and, in 1876 was called to the southern country, settling in Arizona. He was afterwards ordained a Patriarch in the St. Joseph Stake, Arizona. He died September 15, 1904 at Thatcher, Arizona.

John Crook "I was born in Trenton, Lancashire, England October 11, 1831. My father heard of the new religion and went to Bolton to hear them preach, and in September 1840, he, and Robert Holden, were baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the spring of 1847, I was baptized by Uncle Peter Mayho in the brook by Hallith Wood

"Jan. 1st, 1851. We left old England to come to America in the ship *Ellen*. There were about 475 passengers. On the 16th of March a tug boat took two more vessels besides ours up to New Orleans. On March 18th we started up the river for St. Louis; we paid \$2.50 per head, baggage free. On the 25th we landed in St. Louis. It was very cold. Snow on the ground while there; stayed until April 13th, then started for Kanesville. Twenty days on the road, on a sand bar three days; very cold weather; river very low. Landed all safe May 2nd. The Saints were fitting to start for Salt Lake City, Utah.

"In the spring father worked six weeks fitting up wagons. They said all should go that wanted to go. But when the time came around for going we could not get a chance to go—no more room, they said. My brother-in-law, Edmund Kay, and I worked two or three weeks chopping and splitting timber for wagons and we were engaged to go with a train of machinery for working up the beets into sugar in charge of John Taylor and Russell. But father said we must stay and all go together, if we could get a chance

"All the talk through the winter and spring was to fit up and prepare in a body to gather with the Saints in Utah the coming summer. So everyone that could work turned in and were organized in companies, some working fitting up wagons, chains and yokes, etc., others in timber splitting and preparing the timbers. About the first of May they commenced organizing companies and starting them out. Apostle Orson Hyde with Feramorz Little were in charge of this season's emigration. About twenty companies, I think, left for Utah. All that could possibly fit up did so, some yoking up cows and yearling steers. I saw several teams with yearlings yoked in.

"When father was told there was no show for him to get away he felt very bad over it, after the authorities promising that all that turned in and worked none should be left behind. In fact he never seemed to get over it. He seemed to have no life left for anything, and in the month of July he took the chills and fever. In about two weeks he was a corpse—died broken hearted. He died on the 2nd of August and on the 3rd was buried in the cemetery, one half mile north of Kanesville

"In peddling ice I became acquainted with my future wife, then Mary Giles. The family of William Giles were intending to move to Utah in the spring of 1856, so I concluded to sell out and move also. I bought a light wagon and two yoke of steers, costing me \$250.00 in all. By the time I was ready to start on the journey I had about ten dollars left. It was understood that a company of Saints would be organized about the first of June, 1856. So the Giles folks, some four wagons of them, and myself gathered in a ravine south of the city called Hang Hollow, making up and preparing our necessary outfitts.

"About the first of June 1856, we left Hang Hollow for Florence, Nebraska. The gathering place was about six miles from Bluff City across the Missouri River. We crossed our wagons on a ferry boat the second day of June. The first company of Saints to cross the plains was organized on the fourth of June under the direction of Philemon Merrill, as captain, who had crossed the plains nine times before. The company consisted of fifty wagons, divided into companies of ten with a sub-captain.

"The Giles and myself were in E. B. Tripp's company. Elder E. B. Tripp was returning from a mission to the Eastern States. He had two wagons of his own. The first day's drive was about six miles and the next to Ell. Horn river ferry, a trying time to all who were green hands with rattle. In going down the hill, which was very steep to the ferry, my two wild yoke of cattle started to run, and ran the wagon into a deep gully washed out by rains in the road. Result, a broken axle. A grove of hard wood close by supplied a new one and a few spare ones to take along. The end of one stick, which was a little long, I made into a maul, which I have to this day, 1893. This axle was put into Father Giles' wagon on the Big Sandy

near Green River. After completing all repairs and crossing the river we were thoroughly organized with camp and cattle guards. Being then in Indian country it required a thorough system of watchfulness.

"All went along peacefully until one night camping on Wood River, something was seen to crawl in among the cattle, and the cattle stampeded, overturning some wagons in their pell mell rush. It was supposed that the stampede was caused by some "roughs," who had followed us from Council Bluffs with that intention. Here we stayed two or three days gathering up cattle, some never being found, having got mixed with the buffalo. Father Giles lost two good cows in the buffalo herds. This season buffalo were very thick on the plains.

"Most of the emigrant trails traveled on the south side of the Platte River up to Fort Laramie. But we traveled all the way on the north side of the river. In going over the Black Hills to Sweet Water Creek we had to camp one night without water. At Independence Rock the train was halted one hour, giving the people a chance to gather saleratus. I gathered about one bushel in big chunks. This article was much sought after when arriving in the valley. . . .

"After leaving the Platte River we traveled through the Black Hill divisions as feed was in small patches and more scattered than on the great Platte meadows. Dr. Jeter Clinton was appointed over one division and E. B. Tripp another one. Both these gentlemen were of Salt Lake City and well known. Captain Merrill kept the larger division and thus we traveled about one half day's drive apart until we reached the Big Mountain. In going over this mountain we had the first view of the Salt Lake Valley at a distance which made all rejoice, realizing that our journey's end was near.

"On the 14th of August we nooned in a little valley between what is called Big and Little Mountains. This valley is at the head of Parley's canyon. No road down there, travel went over Little Mountain and down Emigration canyon. While nooning there a small train of wagons under the charge of Br. Parrish came along in a rush. They had left Florence about the same time as our train and we had encountered them once or twice on the Platte bottoms. They had bragged of beating us into Salt Lake City by two weeks or more, as their company was small and would have the advantage of feed, etc. Teams, they said, would be in a better condition, but when they understood the climb of the hill, the roads being slippery with showers, their teams gave out and had to double and triple in some cases. Well, we had quite a time also in getting over the mountains. We had to camp in Emigration canyon that night. Early the next morning we hitched up and about four miles down the canyon the road passed over what is termed as Hogs Back, a road cut through a hill. And then we had a full view of Salt Lake City and valley. There was the blue water of Salt Lake in the far west and the beautiful settlements in the foreground. Enchanting to the eye, there was

the scene before us that we had long looked for, read and sung about—the City of the Saints. Oh, what a joy filled each bosom at the sight! About noon, the 15th of August, we rolled into Salt Lake City and went into camp on Emigration Square. We hitched teams, appointed guards and sent cattle to the range some three miles north and beyond Ensign Peak, there to be herded until such time as all parties had made arrangements to scatter throughout the territory wherever friends or connections resided.

"On September 6, 1856 I married Mary Giles in Provo City. We bought ten acres of land joining on the east line of Provo City and got James E. Snow, county surveyor of Utah county, to divide it up into lots, giving us two lots each, six families of the Giles connections. Each sold a yoke of cattle to purchase bread stuffs also land for farming purposes. We made some adobes and built two small houses for the Giles families. Next year we built two more houses, one for me and wife and one for Thomas Rasband and family.

"This was the agreement to work together until we all had houses to live in

"Along in June, 1859 the west half of Heber was laid off in city lots, and in July we moved camp to that city and then commenced hauling logs and building a house. In the spring of 1860 many families moved up from Provo, I believe forty families. On the 14th of July, William Fenn was found drowned in the Provo River. The river was high and in crossing on foot the current took him down. He had been in the stream about two weeks. Had to move him on a sheet, dug a hole in the bank of the river and buried him there. Father Wood acted as coroner."

When Wasatch Stake was organized July 5, 1877 and Heber divided into East and West Wards, John Crook was chosen first counselor to Bishop William Forman of Heber West Ward. He was especially interested in music, genealogy and history and was considered one of Wasatch County's best historians. He was the first choir leader in Heber. His vocation was farming and stock raising and he was the owner of one of the first red sandstone quarries in this area.

John Crook died March 31, 1921 at the age of eighty-nine years, one of the stalwart builders of the valley.—Ethel Johnson

CANUTE PETERSON COMPANY

Canute Peterson was born in Eidsfjord, Hardanger, Norway. He emigrated to America with his parents in 1837 and settled in La Salle county, Illinois where he received the Gospel and was baptized August 12, 1842. He was ordained a Seventy and during the next several years did missionary work among the Norwegians in the vicinity of Wisconsin.